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TAGS: [SENV](#) [KSCA](#) [CITES](#) [AORC](#) [UNEP](#) [BE](#)  
SUBJECT: BELGIUM: RESPONSE TO CITES COP-15 OUTREACH ON U.S. SPECIES PROPOSALS

REF: STATE 6668

SUMMARY

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11. Economic officers delivered reftel points on February 5 to Georges Evrard, Amelie Knapp and Miet van Looy, Belgium's Animal Welfare and CITES Team at the Belgian Federal Public Service Department of Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment. Evrard will lead the Belgian delegation of experts to the Doha meetings, although the Belgian ambassador in Qatar will be the official head of delegation. Contact information for Evrard and the rest of the Belgian delegation members is in paragraph 7. Belgium has yet to arrive at a final position on the U.S. submissions, and of course will need to harmonize its position within the European Union (EU), which will be meeting on February 16 to prepare positions for the Doha meetings. The officials said the hammerhead sharks proposal was particularly strong and well argued, that the coral proposal was also proactive in confronting criticism coming into the conference, and that increased regulation on the snake trade was a good idea. They said the oceanic whitetip shark and bobcat proposals raised some questions due to underdeveloped look-alike standards, and they were curious what was behind the U.S. proposal to de-list the Bobcat. On polar bears, they had been studying the proposal carefully, were still undecided, but believed more data would be necessary before moving the species up to Appendix I; they were unsure about the link between the decline in numbers and trade, which CITES addresses. They thought the snake proposal was worthwhile. End summary.

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Sharks  
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12. The team noted that the proposal for the four hammerhead shark species was very well written and strong. They were supportive of the proposal to move the hammerhead shark species to Appendix II and said that the EU is generally favorable to shark proposals. However, they were less sure about the oceanic whitetip proposal, which they said would be strengthened by a more in-depth look-alike comparison that goes beyond fin color to differentiate between other shark species. They mentioned the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) had an issue with look-alikes.

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Coral  
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13. The Belgians said that since the EU is doing a joint proposal on corals, they were favorable to the proposal. They also mentioned that the proposal was good at confronting earlier criticisms and wondered if the U.S. had done outreach in order to identify and respond to these criticisms in preparation for CoP-15.

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Polar Bear  
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14. They said moving the polar bear from Appendix II to Appendix I is something undecided on an EU level, and that they themselves were still undecided on a Belgian position. The team cited climate change as the main problem facing polar bears, saying more information was needed to see if trade has a large impact on the species with respect to climate. Also, they underlined that the species is very widespread and that there is good management of the species, such as the MoU between Canada and Greenland. They said they would listen closely to the positions of range states on this issue.

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Bobcat  
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15. The team said that they did not fully understand the USG's motion to delete the bobcat species from CITES Appendix II in the first place, and asked whether more clarification could be provided as to why this proposal was being made, and what the benefit of it would be (i.e., reduction of administration burden). They wondered whether states or industry lobbies could be pushing it, for example. They said the issue was sensitive because they need to ensure that it would not impact European populations of the lynx genus, such as the Iberian lynx, which is very threatened. They also stated that the ID guides for the bobcat, while good, were still of limited value because they do not take into account such things as varying colors within species and don't appear to consider other species outside the lynx genus. They also thought that the guide lacked instruction needed to identify the lynxes without more concrete identifiers like the head and tail.

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Snake  
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16. Belgium is supportive of the snake workshop; the experts said it was not controversial, and support was more likely because funding would be provided by the U.S

Delegation information  
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17. Dr Georges Evrard, head of delegation, general advisor to DG Animals, Plants and Food Service Bien-etre Animal and CITES, Georges.Evrard@health.fgov.be, tel.(32) 2 524 74 00.

Amelie Knapp, scientific advisor, Service Bien-etre Animal and CITES, Amelie.knapp@health.fgov.be, tel (32) 2 524 74 25.; she is responsible for all the listing proposals including Bobcat, Corals, Sharks and also on snake trade.

Ms. Miet Van Looy, Miet.VanLooy@health.fgov.be  
Frans Arijs, Frans.Arijs@health.fgov.be  
(to be confirmed) Dr Philippe Jouk (Antwerp Zoo),  
philippe.jouk@zooantwerpen.be  
GUTMAN